NEWSLETTER of the BRITISH COLUMBIA
FIRST NATIONS FORESTRY PROGRAM

The Snuneymuxw First Nation is situated along Nanaimo harbour adjacent to the city of Nanaimo. Members have had a long history of employment in the forest industry, but this has mainly been in the local Nanaimo sawmills and Harmac pulp mill. A recent interest in "non-timber forest products" was seen as a means of decreasing the community's dependence on the traditional forest sector, while diversifying and stabilizing their economic base. (These forest products include mushrooms, berries, medicinal and culinary herbs, craft materials, and native plants and seeds used for landscaping and restoration).

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In 1998/99, the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) contributed $10,000 towards a feasibility study on the economic viability of establishing a non-timber botanical forestry business. The study concentrated on reviewing the market potential of a variety of non-timber forest products and services, and integrating this information with the strategic goals of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

The FNFP-funded study found that while the non-timber forest products industry would provide significant opportunities for the Snuneymuxw people, the industry itself is highly fragmented and very dynamic. The markets are well established in most cases and competition is acute. Consequently, more research will be required into markets and product development to develop an action plan for the Snuneymuxw.

At the same time, there is the potential for enormous benefits to the Snuneymuxw community, as the economic value of these products is well known and presently increasing. Employment in this sector of the forest industry offers community members the flexibility and independence that many of them seek, while still providing a stable economic and employment base. The elders will be able to pass on the oral tradition and preserve the cultural and spiritual uses of these products that their people have utilized forever.

Ultimately, the FNFP study has provided the impetus for the community to further pursue a place in the non-timber forest products industry. Utilizing the information gained through this study, and working in partnership with landowners and tenure holders in their traditional territory, business opportunities and employment can be enhanced for the entire community.

"We recognize that this will require research to fully integrate harvesting non-timber forest products with other forest activities," says Snuneymuxw Forestry Coordinator Dave Mannix. "For instance, we need to know what the effects of fertilization and thinning are on the production of salal foliage – we currently don't know what the effects of variable retention timber harvest systems will be on any of these products. Research will also be required into markets and product development."

The Snuneymuxw people feel that they can offer a level of stewardship to the land owners in their traditional territory that other people involved in harvesting these products have not been able to offer. They have a vested interest in ensuring that the resources are harvested sustainably and respectfully, and through basic training in fire suppression and eco-conservation, they will be able to provide a unique guardianship to the land owners.

For information: Dave Mannix, Forestry Coordinator (250) 753-3481

Cover photo: Golden Chanterelle mushrooms – one of the valuable non-timber forest products harvested by the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

The Laxgalts'ap (Greenville) Village Government (LVG) is a First Nations community situated approximately 150 km northwest of Terrace, on the north side of the Nass River (Lisiims). This community is within the Nisga'a Territory, and has only been accessible by road since the early 1960's.

The First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) is financially contributing towards a training program for the community called 'Aboriginal Businesses – Your Future in Forestry', developed by the Westcoast Forestry Training Center. This specially designed six-day program uses a hands-on, interactive approach, that draws upon resource people and actual case studies to help establish successful forestry businesses for First Nations people and communities.

By contributing to this program, the FNFP is helping to enhance the community's ability to operate and participate in forest-based businesses. The Laxgalts'ap took a significant step towards this goal in 1994 with the development of the Laxgalts'ap Forestry Corporation (LFC), which manages all of the forestry related activities on behalf of the band. With the sales of reserve timber and revenues, and the leasing of a log sort yard, weight scale, and heavy-duty equipment, the LFC is becoming poised to actively participate in the forest industry.

Through efforts from the Laxgalt'ap Village Government and the LFC, significant progress is also being made towards community development – specifically, the development of employment opportunities through community training in silviculture, harvesting, and forest management, all to be done within the foreseeable future.

For more information: Wallace Clark, Administrator, (250) 621-3212.

Aerial photo of Laxgalts'ap (Greenville).

The Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band is a small Secwepemc community located about 26 km north of Kamloops, on the west side of the Thompson River. This community is affiliated with the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council. Approximately 45 band members live on the main reserve, where the primary source of income is from agricultural activities such as haying and ranching. As the band population continues to grow, they have begun to look at the natural resource sector as a means of providing employment, training, and revenue for the community.

The band's reserve forestland base is small (about 68 hectares), and requires careful management to protect, enhance and economically develop their limited available resources. Consequently, the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) is contributing towards upgrading existing Forest Inventory, Operating and Management Plans for the Whispering Pines Indian Band reserves #1 and #4. This project will serve to enhance the capacity of the band to sustainably manage their reserve forests.

"The band community has a goal to endeavor through forest activities based on completed plans and inventories, to capacity build towards management and sustainability of the forest resources, and optimize development and economic benefits," says Jeff Eustache, Project Manager.

This project is unique in that the Project Manager is job shadowing with a Registered Professional Forester to learn and improve his management skills. In turn, the Forest Technician is job shadowing with the Project Manager so that he can improve both his technical and managerial forestry skills. Additionally, the field inventory will not only pick up contemporary cruise data, but will also incorporate native cultural values, such as wildlife, berry picking, and other relevant cultural concerns of band members.

"By doing this the band wishes to come up with an integrated approach to land management, and to create a model for land management which will incorporate band concerns, while enabling them to access revenue to sustain their communities," says Eustache.

He sees the FNFP project as a stepping stone that will help the band manage their resources productively. The new management plan will also support the negotiations for a larger tract of (Crown) forest land off reserve, which will sustain the needs of the Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band.

For more information: Jeff Eustache, Project Manager, Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Bands at (250) 579-5772.

Jeff Eustache, Project Manager, (left) and John Friesen, Amabilis Forest Services Ltd., (right), work together to improve their skills.

Submitted by Dwight Yochim of the Association of BC Professional Foresters

"Forestry isn't rocket science. It is much more complicated," says University of British Columbia professor Dr. Fred Bunnell, chair of the Clayoquot Sound scientific panel. Indeed, the practice of forestry in any country or jurisdiction is an extremely complex profession. Not only do you have to contend with physical aspects such as soil, climate, insects, disease, vegetation, wildlife, streams and fish, but there are also social concerns to consider, such as timber production, jobs, sustainability, community stability, economics, and spiritual and conservation issues. Added to this is the need to respect future generations, evolving social values, international agreements and the impacts of global warming. With planning cycles that are measured in decades, not years, it's true – managing forests is very complicated.

Today we are seeing unprecedented efforts by governments to finalize treaty negotiations around British Columbia. The treaty settlement process will provide First Nations with outright ownership of some forest lands, and may give them a significant say in forest resources management on adjacent lands. We also see First Nations becoming more involved in forest plan consultations and joint ventures in the forest sector. When the last of these treaties is signed, First Nations people will be responsible for vast areas of forest land.

Given the knowledge base needed to manage BC's forests and the importance of those forests to all the people of British Columbia, the provincial government passed the Foresters Act in 1947. This act states that anyone who wishes to practice professional forestry and/or calls themselves a professional forester must meet formal education and experience requirements, and be registered with the Association of British Columbia Professional Foresters (ABCPF). This ensures that those who are making the decisions about BC's forests are not only capable of doing the job, but can also be held accountable for their decisions. Since 1947, membership in the ABCPF has grown to almost 3,000 registered professional foresters.

For the last few years, many First Nations groups have hired outside experts to provide advice and guidance regarding forest management. While this does work, there would be obvious benefits from having someone within the community plan and carry out forest management activities. Those managing the forests need to have sufficient training and experience to fulfill their responsibilities.

Currently, three universities in western Canada - the University of British Columbia, the University of Northern British Columbia and the University of Alberta - have accredited degree programs that satisfy the education requirements to become a professional forester. These universities are working hard to increase the number of First Nations forestry graduates, and although results have so far been modest, the goal is still a desirable one.

It is in everyone's best interest to have knowledgeable and accountable people managing our complex forest resources for economic, social and ecological gain. Are you up to the challenge?

For information on the practice of professional forestry or the Association of BC Professional Foresters contact:

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The Hupacasath First Nation's territory includes the Alberni Valley and beyond, with two of their five reserves located in and around the urban Port Alberni area. In recent years community members have suffered through the downsizing and shutdowns in the local forestry sector, but have remained interested in all aspects of forestry.

This year the FNFP has contributed $25,000 to the band for forestry management training, and Hupacasath member Brandy Lauder is currently under going on-the-job training in all aspects of forest management (engineering, cultural heritage resources, ecoforestry, forest health and silviculture). This training is part of a partnership with MacMillan Bloedel and the B.C. Ministry of Forests, in addition to the Hupacasath and the FNFP. Most importantly, the project is serving to tie the work accomplished in the previous projects together, as the Hupacasath now have the capacity to fully deal with all referrals.

"Our hands-on involvement in forestry has really only developed over the last four years," notes Tawney Lem, the Hupacasath Treaty Manager. "For example, prior to then, forestry referrals such as Five Year Development Plans were sent to our office, but we didn't have the capacity to deal with the plans in an effective way."

The FNFP helped address this problem in 1996/97 by contributing to a silviculture training program, which trained eight Hupacasath members in brushing, weeding, pruning and thinning. Based on this program, one member started a silviculture company and began to contract with local licensees. The company is currently in its fourth year of successful operations.

This proved to be a good start, but offered only limited and seasonal employment opportunities. The community realized that there were other areas, such as small-scale sustainable harvesting and value-added projects, that they could explore either on their own or in partnership situations. Although the Hupacasath lacked experience in these types of ventures, they recognized that their first step should be to examine the forestry potential of the reserve lands that they controlled.

Consequently, the First Nations Forestry Program approved $20,000 last year to develop a management plan on 112 hectares of operable forest land contained on three of their reserves. This project also served to train two Hupacasath members in timber cruising field operations. Nevertheless, it became evident that to ensure that the management plan was implemented effectively, the Hupacasath Nation would need a trained member to work in the area of natural resource management.

Discussions were initiated with MacMillan Bloedel about a First Nations Forestry Liaison position, and they agreed to enter into a partnership. Building forestry capacity for the Hupacasath Nation has truly been an evolutionary process, and they have continued to build on their present position.

Using their reserve management plan as the basis for a woodlot application, the band was successful in obtaining a woodlot license that gives them an Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) of 1,500 cubic metres from 260 hectares of Crown land. They are now expanding the reserve management plan to cover the entire woodlot of 372 hectares. Once operations commence on the License, Hupacasath members will be available to do the work associated with engineering, surveying, silviculture and public information forums.

As Tawney puts it: "The First Nations Forestry Program has been a crucial part of the Hupacasath's involvement with forestry. Other projects have provided piecemeal assistance and skills, but the FNFP was the one source that provided the continuity needed to bring us to where we are now."

For information: Tawney Lem, Treaty Manager (250) 724-3421

photo right: Hupacasath First Nations Forestry Liaison Officer, Brandy Lauder, in woodlot license #1902.

Small Woodlands Program

Submitted by Jill Dunbar, Small Woodlands Program, BC Ministry of Forests

First Nations and owners of non-industrial private forest land may be interested in the new Small Woodlands Program. This program is being developed to encourage small scale forestry on private land and First Nations reserves. The intent is to increase B.C.'s wood supply and create forest jobs following sound environmental principles.

A just-completed survey of over 900 forest land owners shows that services such as on-site consultations by forestry specialists, self-study handbooks, newsletters, and an accessible library would help to realize full property potential. The land owners indicated interest in a wide range of topics from forest management planning and harvesting to silviculture and agroforestry. The Small Woodlands Program will focus on providing practical, convenient and high quality services to meet these needs.

Pilot sessions of Master Woodlands Manager training have already taken place. The idea is to prepare experienced landowner volunteers to share their knowledge with others. Other projects underway are production of an agroforestry guide, a catalogue of reference materials, a business planning and marketing guide, and a Small Woodlands Program website.

To keep up to date on these projects, watch for more bulletins or call the Small Woodlands Program toll free at 1-877-847-1830. You may also write to the program at: Box 2179, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0

This is the fourth year for this extremely successful program, which has enhanced First Nations' ability to participate in the forestry sector in a variety of areas. The total number of proposals received for the 1999/2000 fiscal year was 105, with $2.7 million being requested from the FNFP. Of these, the FNFP Management Board funded 42 projects totaling $956,395.

Most of the projects funded this year focus on planning and training, which is allowing First Nations to get involved in the technical and administrative side of forestry. Additionally, there has been a move in the last few years for the Bands to take on more of the project management themselves, rather than contracting it out.

Recipient	Community	Project Title	FNFP Funding
Boothroyd Indian Band	Boston Bar	Enhancing Reserve Land	$25,000
Boston Bar First Nation	Boston Bar	Development of 3C (Custom Cut Cedar) Enterprises and Kopchitchin Horse Logging Business Opportunities	$25,000
Canim Lake Band	100 Mile House	Forest Resource Management and Training Program - Reserve Sustainable Forest Management	$24,227
Cheslatta Carrier Nation	Burns Lake	Nechako Reservoir Salvage and Sawmill Coordination	$18,500
Fraser Canyon Tribal Admin.	Lytton	FCTA Forestry Development Project	$15,000
Gitanyow Dev. Corp.	Kitwanga	Building Sustainability in the Gitanyow Forest Sector	$25,000
Gwaalaaga Naay Corporation	Skidegate	Skidegate Forestry Equipment and Woodlot Inventory	$25,000
Gwa'Sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Council	Port Hardy	Gwa'Sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Forestry Project	$25,000
Hartley Bay Band Council	Hartley Bay	Gitga'at Forestry Project	$25,000
Homalco Indian Band	Campbell River	Bute Inlet Development Corporation IR Management Plan and Business Development	$25,000
Hupacasath First Nation	Port Alberni	Hupacasath Forestry Management Training	$25,000
Kamloops Indian Band	Kamloops	Kamloops Indian Band Forest Reserve Inventory (Phase 1)	$25,000
Katzie First Nation	Pitt Meadows	Katzie Forest Mgmt. Dev. & Inventory	$23,752
Khowutzun Forest Svcs. Ltd.	Duncan	Silviculture Project - Brushing & Weeding On-the-Job Training	$7,141
Kwadacha Band	Prince George	Advanced Silviculture Management Training and Equipment Purchases	$25,000
Lheidli T'enneh First Nation Dev. Corp.	Prince George	Forest Technician Training Initiative	$25,000
Lower Similkameen Indian Band	Keremeos	Forest Management Plan for Reserve Lands	$25,000
Ma-Mook Dev. Corp.	Port Alberni	Development and Marketing of NTFP's in Clayoquot Sound	$24,500
Matsqui First Nation	Matsqui	Matsqui First Nation Ecological and Timber Inventory on Three Island	$12,686
Nak'al Koh Logging	Fort St. James	Forest Planning and Management	$24,145
Namgis First Nation	Alert Bay	Namgis Forestry Project	$25,000
Neskonlith Dev. Corp.	Chase	Woodlot Management, Technician Mentoring and Business Planning	$25,000
Nicola Tribal Assoc.	Merritt	Innovative Forest Practices Joint Venture Development	$25,000
NVIT	Merritt	First Nations Forestry Business Workshop	$25,000
Nooaitch Indian Band	Merritt	Eagle Nest Log Industries Ltd. Business Start-Up	$25,000
Nuxalk Nation	Bella Coola	Nuxalk Forest Project: Seizing the Opportunities	$25,000
Office of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs	Moricetown	Wet'suwet'en Forestry Development Project-Phase 3	$25,000
Okanagan Indian Band	Vernon	Strategic Business Plan	$18,500
Osoyoos Indian Band	Osoyoos	Osoyoos First Nations in Partnership with Weyerhaeuser Canada - Logging	$25,000
Shalalth/Seton Dev.Corp.Ltd.	Shalalth	Klondike Shelter	$25,000
Skatin First Nation	Pemberton	Woodlot #1786 Management Plan and Forest Development Plan	$24,284
Skeetchestn Indian Band	Savona	Operational Planning for Woodlot #1600	$24,700
Toquaht First Nation	Ucluelet	Exploration of Potential Value-Added Products	$10,000
Tree of Life Essential Oil	Port Hardy	Tree of Life Essential Oil Bus. Dev. and Training	$24,960
Tsawataineuk Band Council	Kingcome Inlet	Tsawataineuk Forestry Resource Operational Plan	$25,000
Tsay Keh Dene First Nation	Prince George	Tsay Keh Dene Forestry Program	$25,000
Tseshaht First Nation	Port Alberni	Management Plan for Tseshaht I.R. Lands	$25,000
T'Sou-ke First Nation	Sooke	Forestry Business Opportunity Assessment and Planning	$25,000
Upper Similkameen	Keremeos	Forest Resource Co-Management Agreement	$17,500
Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band	Kamloops	Natural Resources & Forestry Management & Operations Plan	$15,000
Yale First Nation	Hope	Forestry Business Development	$21,500

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